

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. 1. A method of providing online presence information:
2. maintaining a list of people known to a user;
3. accessing online presence information for the user;
4. determining a potential receiver of the online presence information;
5. comparing the potential receiver to the maintained list to determine if the potential receiver is included on the list; and
6. determining whether to communicate the online presence information to the potential receiver based on whether the potential receiver is included in the list.
1. 2. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining to not communicate the online presence information to the potential receiver when the potential receiver is not included in the list.
1. 3. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining whether to communicate the online presence information to an instant messaging application of the potential receiver.
1. 4. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining whether to display the online presence information on a web page.
1. 5. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining whether to display the online presence information in member search results.
1. 6. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining whether to display the online presence information in a member profile.

- 1 7. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining whether to
3 communicate the online presence information to the potential receiver when a request for
4 online presence information is received from the potential receiver.

- 1 8. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining whether to
3 communicate the online presence information to the potential receiver absent a request
4 from the potential receiver for the online presence information.

- 1 9. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 inferring that a person is known to the user based on positive user actions related to e-
3 mail communications from the person;
4 adding the inferred person to the list.

- 1 10. The method of claim 9 wherein the positive actions include sending an e-mail to the
2 person.

- 1 11. The method of claim 9 wherein the positive actions include replying to, forwarding,
2 saving, or printing an e-mail received from the person.

- 1 12. The method of claim 9 wherein the positive actions include moving an e-mail from a
2 first folder to a second folder.

- 1 13. The method of claim 12 wherein the first folder is an inbox folder and the second
2 folder is a folder other than a delete folder or a spam folder.

- 1 14. The method of claim 9 wherein the positive action includes leaving an e-mail from
2 the person open for a predetermined period of time.

- 1 15. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 inferring that a person is known to the user based, at least in part, on detecting a

3 communication between the user and the person;
4 adding the inferred person to the list.

1 16. The method of claim 15 wherein the communication is an instant messaging
2 communication.

1 17. The method of claim 1 further comprising inferring that a person is known to the
2 user, wherein inferring comprises:

3 accessing a contact list of the user to determine a first contact on the user's contact
4 list; and

5 accessing a contact list of the first contact to determine a second contact on the first
6 contact's contact list.

1 18. The method of claim 1 further comprising inferring that a person is known to the user
2 based, at least in part, on detecting user actions that mitigate against factors that
3 otherwise are used to infer a person is known to the user.

1 19. The method of claim 18 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
2 report a communication from the person as spam.

1 20. The method of claim 18 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
2 add a person to a blacklist.

1 21. The method of claim 18 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
2 move a communication from the person to either of a spam folder or a delete folder.

1 22. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 enabling the user to expressly designate a person as known to the user; and
3 adding the designated person to the list.

1 23. A computer-readable medium having a computer program embodied thereon for
2 providing online presence information, the computer program comprising instructions for
3 causing a computer to perform the following operations:

4 maintain a list of people known to a user;
5 access online presence information for the user;
6 determine a potential receiver of the online presence information;
7 compare the potential receiver to the maintained list to determine if the potential
8 receiver is included on the list; and
9 determine whether to communicate the online presence information to the potential
10 receiver based on whether the potential receiver is included in the list.

1 24. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises
3 instructions for causing the computer to determine to not communicate the online
4 presence information to the potential receiver when the potential receiver is not included
5 in the list.

1 25. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises
3 instructions for causing the computer to determine whether to communicate the online
4 presence information to an instant messaging application of the potential receiver.

1 26. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises
3 instructions for causing the computer to determine whether to display the online presence
4 information on a web page.

1 27. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises
3 instructions for causing the computer to determine whether to display the online presence
4 information in member search results.

1 28. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises

3 instructions for causing the computer to determine whether to display the online presence
4 information in a member profile.

1 29. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises
3 instructions for causing the computer to determine whether to communicate the online
4 presence information to the potential receiver when a request for online presence
5 information is received from the potential receiver.

1 30. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises
3 instructions for causing the computer to determine whether to communicate the online
4 presence information to the potential receiver absent a request from the potential receiver
5 for the online presence information.

1 31. The medium of claim 23 wherein the computer program further comprises
2 instructions for causing the computer to:
3 infer that a person is known to the user based on positive user actions related to e-
4 mail communications from the person;
5 add the inferred person to the list.

1 32. The medium of claim 31 wherein the positive actions include sending an e-mail to the
2 person.

1 33. The medium of claim 31 wherein the positive actions include replying to, forwarding,
2 saving, or printing an e-mail received from the person.

1 34. The medium of claim 31 wherein the positive actions include moving an e-mail from
2 a first folder to a second folder.

1 35. The medium of claim 34 wherein the first folder is an inbox folder and the second
2 folder is a folder other than a delete folder or a spam folder.

1 36. The medium of claim 31 wherein the positive action includes leaving an e-mail from
2 the person open for a predetermined period of time.

1 37. The medium of claim 23 wherein the computer program further comprises
2 instructions for causing the computer to:
3 inferring that a person is known to the user based, at least in part, on detecting a
4 communication between the user and the person;
5 adding the inferred person to the list.

1 38. The medium of claim 37 wherein the communication is an instant messaging
2 communication.

1 39. The medium of claim 23 wherein the computer program further comprises
2 instructions for causing the computer to infer that a person is known to the user and
3 wherein, to infer that a person is known to the user the computer program further
4 comprises instructions for causing the computer to:
5 access a contact list of the user to determine a first contact on the user's contact list;
6 and
7 access a contact list of the first contact to determine a second contact on the first
8 contact's contact list.

1 40. The medium of claim 23 wherein the computer program further comprises
2 instructions for causing the computer to infer that a person is known to the user based, at
3 least in part, on detecting user actions that mitigate against factors that otherwise are used
4 to infer a person is known to the user.

1 41. The medium of claim 40 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
2 report a communication from the person as spam.

1 42. The medium of claim 40 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
2 add a person to a blacklist.

1 43. The medium of claim 40 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
2 move a communication from the person to either of a spam folder or a delete folder.

1 44. The medium of claim 23 wherein the computer program further comprises
2 instructions for causing the computer to:

3 enable the user to expressly designate a person as known to the user; and
4 add the designated person to the list.

1 45. An apparatus for providing online presence information:
2 means for maintaining a list of people known to a user;
3 means for accessing online presence information for the user;
4 means for determining a potential receiver of the online presence information;
5 means for comparing the potential receiver to the maintained list to determine if the
6 potential receiver is included on the list; and
7 means for determining whether to communicate the online presence information to
8 the potential receiver based on whether the potential receiver is included in the list.